

## **A Report of the 8th Annual Meeting of the Tamilnadu Canonists' Association**

The 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Tamil Nadu Canonists' Association was held on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> January 2000 in St. Paul's Seminary, Tiruchirappalli. Twenty three members participated in this meeting.

After a short reflection of a scripture passage given by Fr. Peter Thumma, Fr. Y. Irudayaraj welcomed the participants. The meeting was inaugurated by Rev. Fr. R.V. Mathias, Vicar General of the Diocese of Tiruchirappalli. In his inaugural address he pointed out the connection between love and law, stressed the need for feeling one with the church, and exposed the fragmentation in the church which is the result of following the law of the world instead of following the law of Christ. He brought out the need for the fusion of the religious and the local church.

Fr. M. Philomindas of the Diocese of Kumbakonam read out a paper on "The Local church and the Religious". He highlighted the following points: Ecclesiology of Vatican II and the place of the religious; Pastoral Jurisdiction of the Diocesan Bishop and the ways of promoting relation between the Bishop, the Diocesan Clergy and the Religious.

In his conclusion he pointed out that many areas of the apostolate in India can be more effectively carried out if all the efforts of the Religious and the Local Church are put together. A well-defined pastoral plan involving the religious, mutual respect and freedom and common approach towards social problems will certainly improve the present condition.

The participants had group discussion on the positive and negative impact of the religious in the local church, mainly in the areas of Evangelization, Pastoral Activities, Public Divine Worship and various forms of Apostolate. They shared the fruit of their discussions and suggested some ways and means of overcoming the present shortcomings.

Fr. A. Henry Maria Louis of the Diocese of Udhamandalam read out a paper on "Catholic Education in the context of Tamilnadu". After explaining Education as the formation of the whole person, involving knowledge, skills and values, he dwelt on the following points: The church and education, Indian church and Education, Education in the light of the teaching of Vatican II and the 1983 code of canon law and the identity of the catholic Educational Institutions. Under the section on Education in the context of Tamilnadu, he evaluated the Educational Institutions run by the Religious as well as by the Diocesan Priests. He raised a number of questions for critical analysis and future course of action.

The participants were of the view that the present catholic Education is appointed and 100% result oriented. They concluded that the need of the hour is to concentrate more on the catechetical and integral formation of the students.

Fr. Cletus Rex gave a synopsis of his licentiate dissertation: "The Responsibility of the Diocesan Bishop in the Temporal Goods of the Church".

Fr. Alagu Selvan gave a synopsis of the Annual Conference of the Canon Law society of India held at Goa.

The participants shared their problems connected with marriage cases and some other canonical issues. They also discussed on the progress made in the Translation Work of the 1983 Code.

Final Statements, relating to the two papers read out in the meeting in St. Paul's Seminary in January 2001, the week after pongal holidays.

The following topics and persons were fixed for the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting:

1. Fr. Pascalraj : Relevance of the Diocesan synod in the Context of Tamilnadu
2. Fr. Cletus Rex: Civil Law in the Administration of Temporal Goods in the Parish.
3. Fr. Swaminathan : Tamil culture affecting marriage consent, especially arranged marriages and dowry system

Fr. M. Rajasekaran proposed a vote of thanks and the meeting came to a close with a hymn to our Lady.

## **Final Statements**

The Canonists of Tamilnadu during their 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting held in St. Paul's Seminary, Tiruchirappalli on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> January 2000 discussed on "The Mutual Relationship between the Local Church and the Religious". They made the following general statements and some concrete proposals for the good of the local church and the religious.

### **I. General Statements**

#### **A. The Diocesan Bishops and the Clergy are expected:**

- ✓ To respect the religious life, defend and promote it.
- ✓ To encourage the religious to recruit candidates in the diocese for their institutes.
- ✓ To help the religious to be faithful to their charism and community life.
- ✓ To get the opinions of the religious in those areas in which they are well qualified.
- ✓ To pay a just remuneration for works done by the work entrusted to them by the Bishop or the parish priest.
- ✓ To refrain from interfering in the internal administration of the religious institutes.

#### **B. On the part of the Religious**

- ❖ They are to be organically inserted into the local church.
- ❖ They are represented in the Diocesan synod (c.463), in the Senate of Priests (c. 498) and in the Diocesan Pastoral Council (c.512).
- ❖ They are to promptly and faithfully comply with the requests of the bishop when asked to undertake missionary, pastoral and other apostolic activities.
- ❖ They are not to give the impression that they are running a parallel church.
- ❖ From novitiate onwards they are to be brought to a fuller awareness and concern for the local church.

## II. Concrete Proposals

- A well defined written agreement between the diocese and the religious institute is necessary in case of works entrusted by the bishop to a religious institute (c.681). Where there is no such agreement, it is advisable to make a fresh one. Old agreements are to be renewed and updated.
- The need of the diocese must be the primary concern when inviting a religious institute to work in the diocese; also prior consultation with the senate of priests by the diocesan bishop is recommended.
- The appointment of an Episcopal Vicar is strongly recommended in order to look after the welfare of the religious and to coordinate the activities of the religious and the diocese.
- The religious are to be involved both in the preparation and the implementation of the pastoral plan of the diocese or of the parish.
- A stable forum for the interaction between the religious superiors and the diocesan bishop and the representatives of the diocesan clergy is most welcome.
- The guide-lines of the diocesan bishop regarding catechetical instruction, education policy, donation etc. are to be observed by the religious.
- In order to avoid scandal and confusion among Christ's faithful; the religious are earnestly requested not to deviate from liturgical rules and norms.

16.02.2000

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